



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Mosquito-Borne Disease Activity in Mexico and Latin America

SACRAMENTO - The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is urging the public to protect themselves against mosquito bites and mosquito-borne diseases if traveling to Mexico or Latin America. These regions reported increased chikungunya and continued dengue transmission in 2014, and reported cases of these mosquito-borne diseases among travelers returning to California have increased.

Chikungunya is a viral disease characterized by acute onset of fever and severe joint pain. Dengue, another viral disease, is characterized by high fever, severe headache, muscle and joint pain, rash, and in severe cases bleeding manifestations. For both, treatment is supportive, the disease is not contagious person to person, and there is no vaccine.

Chikungunya was first introduced to the Caribbean in late 2013, and by Dec. 31, 2014, approximately 26,000 confirmed cases were reported from the Caribbean and Central, South, and North America, including 155 cases in Mexico. Dengue transmission has also been prevalent throughout Latin American countries in recent years, and the risk of dengue is present in several Mexican states, including Baja California Sur (where Cabo San Lucas and La Paz are popular tourist areas) which reported increased cases in 2014. Last year in California, 126 cases of dengue and 119 cases of chikungunya were reported, all with a history of travel to areas where transmission of those diseases was occurring. Of the 2014 reported cases, 103 chikungunya and 67 dengue cases had a history of travel to Latin America. The number of reported California dengue cases with a history of travel to Mexico has increased in the last two years, 64 in 2013-2014 compared with 17 in 2010-2012.

Dengue and chikungunya viruses are transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These two mosquitoes are aggressive day-biters that can potentially transmit the virus after biting an infected person.

CDPH recommends that travelers to Mexico and Latin America prevent exposure to mosquito bites by wearing protective clothing and applying insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535 according to label instructions. DEET can be used safely on infants and children two months of age and older. In addition, make sure that your hotel or lodging has air conditioning or doors and windows with tight-fitting screens to keep out mosquitoes.

If you have returned from an affected region and have fever with joint pain or rash within the two weeks following your return, please contact your medical provider and tell the doctor where you have traveled.

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